

DT 00-029

CHOCTAW COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

**Petition for Authority to Provide
Local Telecommunications Services**

Order Nisi Granting Authorization

O R D E R N O. 23,540

July 24, 2000

On February 10, 2000, Choctaw Communications, Inc. (CC) filed with the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (Commission) a petition for authority to provide switched and non-switched local exchange telecommunications services, pursuant to the policy goals set by the New Hampshire Legislature in RSA 374:22-g, effective July 23, 1995. On May 12, 2000, and June 12, 2000, CC filed additional information.

Pursuant to Puc Chapter 1300, an applicant's petition for certification shall be granted when the Commission finds that (1) all information listed in Puc 1304.02 has been provided to the Commission; (2) the applicant meets standards for financial resources, managerial qualifications, and technical competence; and, (3) certification for the particular geographic area requested is in the public good.

The Commission Staff (Staff) has reviewed CC's petition for compliance with these standards. Staff reports

that the company has provided all the information required by Puc 1304.02. The information provided supports CC's assertion of financial resources, managerial qualifications, and technical competence sufficient to meet the standards set out in Puc 1304.01(b), (e), (f), and (g). Staff, therefore, recommends approval of CC as a New Hampshire CLEC.

We find that CC has satisfied the requirements of Puc 1304.01(a)(1) and (2). In addition, we find that certification of CC in its intended service area, Bell Atlantic's current service area, is in the public good, thus meeting the requirement of Puc 1304.01(a)(3). In making this finding, as directed by RSA 374:22-g, we have considered the interests of competition, fairness, economic efficiency, universal service, carrier of last resort, the incumbent's opportunity to realize a reasonable return on its investment, and recovery by the incumbent of expenses incurred. This finding is further supported by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (TAct). Because CC has satisfied the requirements of Puc 1304.01(a), we will grant certification.

As part of its application, CC agreed to abide by Bell Atlantic's present and future rates for intraLATA switched access or to charge a lower rate. If, at any point, CC seeks to exceed Bell Atlantic's access rates it shall first

contact the Staff to review the proposal. The Commission will monitor access rates as the intraLATA toll and local exchange markets develop. CLECs charging higher access rates than they, in turn, pay Bell Atlantic could inhibit intraLATA toll competition which would call into question Section 253 of the TAct.

We note that as new competitors enter the market, greater pressure is put on the 603 area code, so long as today's antiquated number assignment process remains in effect. Accordingly, we will require that CC request and use numbers responsibly and conservatively, and to join in exploring alternative mechanisms to use existing numbers as efficiently as possible and thereby avert the need for a new area code. By granting this authority CC is required to comply with our orders on number conservation including Order No. 23,385 issued January 7, 2000 and Order No. 23,392 issued January 27, 2000 as well as further orders issued by the Commission concerning this matter.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED NISI, that CC's petition for authority to provide switched and non-switched intrastate local exchange telecommunications services in the service territory of Bell Atlantic, is GRANTED, subject, inter alia to the requirements

of Puc 1304.03; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that Choctaw Communications, Inc. is required to comply with our Order No. 23,385 issued January 7, 2000, Order No. 23,392 issued January 27, 2000, and further orders issued by the Commission concerning number conservation; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petitioner shall cause a copy of this Order Nisi to be published once in a statewide newspaper of general circulation, such publication to be no later than July 31, 2000 and to be documented by affidavit filed with this office on or before August 7, 2000; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that all persons interested in responding to this Order Nisi shall submit their comments or file a written request for a hearing on this matter before the Commission no later than August 10, 2000; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that this Order Nisi shall be effective August 21, 2000, unless the Commission provides otherwise in a supplemental order issued prior to the effective date; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petitioner shall file, ten days prior to commencing service, a rate schedule including the name, description and price of each service, with the

Commission in accordance with N.H. Admin. Rules, Puc
1304.03(b).

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New
Hampshire this twenty-fourth day of July, 2000.

Douglas L. Patch
Chairman

Susan S. Geiger
Commissioner

Nancy Brockway
Commissioner

Attested by:

Thomas B. Getz
Executive Director and Secretary